

WYCOMBE WANDERERS crashed to their heaviest defeat for a long time on Saturday when they visited Enfield for the top-of-the-table clash in the Isthmian League Premier Division. Not only were the Blues defeated, they were outfought, out-thought and outclassed.

If any confirmation was needed that Wycombe are not good enough seriously to challenge for the title this season, it was certainly made clear at Southbury Road. Leaders Enfield strolled through the 90 minutes and produced some glorious football. Time and again

they threatened to score and they made it look so easy, it was almost embarrassing on occasions.

Only desperate defending, sound goalkeeping and Enfield's disinterest in the last quarter saved Wycombe from what could have been a five or six goal thrashing. And if defeat had been that heavy, there could have been few excuses. On the day, Enfield were streets ahead of Wanderers — something that has not been said for a long time in their eight-year reign as the league's top club.

Enfield had not beaten Wycombe since March '73, but from the kick-off there looked only one winner. Enfield's football was a class above anything Wanderers

could produce. Prompted by the experienced Ronnie Howell and Derek Baker in midfield, they tore the Blues' defence to ribbons with superb moves. The giant Tony Bass gave his former Hendon team-mate Alan Phillips a nightmare 90 minutes in the air while ex-Wanderer Keith Searle and man of the match John Bishop played major roles in the rout.

Enfield so dominated the first half of the match that Wycombe were restricted to just two efforts at goal. To be fair, the Blues did improve in the second half and might well have scored with more luck but overall Enfield were vastly the superior side in every department.

Only two Wycombe players — Derek Harris and Roger Day — can look back on the match with any satisfaction, the rest of the side will want to forget it as

quickly as possible. Clearly, some of the Wanderers team were just not good enough to compete with the best team in the league.

WRONG SELECTION

In my view, manager John Reardon made the wrong selection when he chose Paul Birdseye to play in midfield. On this of all days, he needed a proven back four. As it transpired Birdseye had only 45 minutes on the field due to an injury but there was a marked improvement in midfield when substitute Graham Mackenzie came on, and at least chances were created.

Wanderers found themselves on the rack as early as the third minute when Bass, surely the best target man around at this level, headed narrowly wide. Two minutes later only a brilliant save from Peter Spittle foiled Enfield when he leapt full length to tip away Baker's curling shot after Birdseye had lost posses-

sion on the edge of his area. From the corner Bass flicked in a shot which looked a certain goal until Spittle stuck out a leg to deflect the ball away.

There was some respite after that barrage but Enfield continued to look by far the more dangerous side. With left-back John Tone overlapping constantly, and Howell also playing wide, they used the full width of the pitch to stretch the Blues back four which never seemed happy. In contrast, Wanderers' long-ball-up-the-middle play looked basic and repeatedly foundered through slack control.

Enfield, who lost Mick O'Sullivan with a leg injury after 11 minutes, brought on Nick Glover upfront and switched Bishop to midfield. This enforced move worked like a dream as Bishop completely dominated events from then on.

The home side went ahead after 20 minutes with a rather lucky goal. Spittle, who had made those two fine saves earlier, misjudged Bass's header, thinking it was going wide. But to his agony, the ball squeezed in by the upright to give Enfield a thoroughly deserved lead.

Wycombe didn't help their cause in the first half by casually playing about with the ball around their penalty area. For some reason, Spittle often rolled the ball out to his defenders instead of thumping it downfield and this did little to lift the Blues' sagging confidence.

25-YARD DRIVE

Wanderers' only worthwhile effort of the half came from Howard Kennedy after 35 minutes. As Enfield backed pedalled, he tried his luck from 25 yards and sent Terry Moore full length to tip the shot around a post. The action was soon back in the Wycombe area, however, when only a desperate tackle from Phillips halted Glover.

Birdseye left the field after a clash with Bishop just before the break and although he returned for the second half he lasted only two minutes before going off.

Although Enfield tended to over-elaborate after the interval, they also produced some sweet attacks. Bass headed over and then Steve Vass almost put through his own goal when under pressure. Eventually Wanderers cracked again when Graham Mackenzie was adjudged to have brought down Glover inside the box. Referee Tony Cox had no doubts about the penalty which Howell expertly slotted home to make it 2-1.

Two minutes later Wanderers had their best chance to score when Dylan Evans robbed Tony Jennings and put Tony Horseman through. 'Bodger' shot early but saw Moore stick out a hopeful arm to push the ball away. A goal then might possibly have made some difference but somehow, I doubt if Wanderers could have fought their way back into a match that was already far beyond their reach.

Enfield wrapped up the match with a classic third goal in the 77th minute. Baker put Bishop away on the right from half-way. Howell supported him on the outside and then cut inside. Looking up he spotted Glover making a near post run and his superb pass was beautifully tucked home by the former Tooting marksman. It was the best goal I've seen this season.

After that, Enfield sat back on their lead and allowed Wycombe to come back into the game for the first time. The Blues won four corners in the last five minutes but by then it was far too late to affect the result.

On this form, Enfield look odds-on favourites from the title and with performances like this one, they will deserve it. As for Wycombe they obviously need new players in certain departments if they are to finish near the top.

ENFIELD: T. Moore; M. Wright, A. Jennings, K. Elley, J. Tone; R. Howell, M. O'Sullivan (Sub N. Glover 11 mins), D. Baker, K. Searle, A. Bass, J. Bishop.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, S. Vass, P. Birdseye (Sub G. Mackenzie 47 mins), R. Day, H. Kennedy, A. Horseman, D. Harris, D. Evans.

Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers:** Enfield — Bass (20), Howell Pen (68), Glover (77).

Referee: T. Cox (Buckhurst Hill).

By STUART EARP Enfield 3, Wycombe Wanderers 0

15.10.77.

V WYCOMBE WANDERERS (Home) 3-0 H.T. 1-0

A return to vintage form by the E's as they outclassed and outgamed their old rivals in every phase of the game. Mickie O'Sullivan limped off with hamstring trouble early on, but this appeared to be the turning point of the game as instead of being more fluent and constructive in their approach to the game, TONY BASS gave the E's a deserved lead when his